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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: RUSSIAN ENGAGEMENT WITH CENTRAL ASIAN CENTER -
CARICC

REF: 07 UNVIE 721

1.(SBU) This is an action request for Embassy Moscow. Department requests Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) Chief and Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) Attache first approach interlocutors within the Government of Russia (GOR) informally about increased, meaningful cooperation with the Central Asia Regional Information Coordination Center (CARICC), based in Almaty, Kazakhstan. NAS and DEA are requested to inquire about Russia signing the CARICC Framework Agreement within the next three months, ratifying the Agreement, and possible secondment of experienced counternarcotics staff to the Center within the same time frame. If Government of Russia (GOR) interlocutors are unable to confirm actions will happen within three months, Post is requested to then demarche the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to urge Russia to demonstrate their commitment to this important Eurasian institution by taking action to ratify the Agreement and send appropriate staff to Almaty. Suggested language for approach and demarche is contained in paragraph 4.

2.(U) BACKGROUND: CARICC is a regional law enforcement center designed to improve interdiction and analysis of smuggling trends, particularly smuggling of drugs. The Center is a multilateral project, implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Funding for CARICC comes from the United States (The International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Bureau has provided \$2.8 million in funding to date), as well as modest funding from Italy, Canada, Finland, Great Britain, and Turkey. Russia is a founding member state of CARICC, and the destination country for much of the narcotics flowing north from Afghanistan through Central Asia. Unfortunately, Russia has yet to sign or ratify the CARICC Framework Agreement or to send Russian law enforcement personnel to staff the center, now in its pilot phase. In multilateral and bilateral settings, Russian authorities have repeatedly stated that they wish to pursue cooperation with the United States on counternarcotics and counterterrorism projects. The Department believes the CARICC center offers a way for Russia to partner with the U.S. and Central Asia to improve the ability of law enforcement personnel to detect smuggling trends, to provide better law enforcement information sharing, and to interdict the flow of drugs. Other member states, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have finalized their legislation;

Turkmenistan became the first member state to ratify the Central Asia Regional Information Coordination Center Framework Agreement on December 28, 2007. The Center is currently operating in a pilot phase, with seconded staff from Kazakhstan (the host country), and law enforcement officers from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan doing analysis of smuggling trends based on reports from their home government's law enforcement personnel. END BACKGROUND.

13. (SBU) The Department would appreciate any information NAS and DEA gather about why Russia has been reluctant to sign and ratify the framework agreement or to send officers to staff the Center. Not only do the drugs wind up in Russia, this is a clear opportunity for Russia to put its imprimatur on the Center's activities, as they are regional leaders in technical expertise and analysis of counternarcotics and smuggling trends. The Department also believes that Russian leadership would improve longer-term Central Asian commitment to the Center.

14. (U) If NAS and DEA are unable to confirm that ratification of the CARICC legislation and staff support will take place in the very near term, Embassy Moscow should draw on the following language for a demarche to appropriate government ministries to encourage Russia to demonstrate their commitment to deter smuggling of narcotics and other illicit goods and their willingness to cooperate with the U.S. in this effort.

-- The U.S. appreciates the many offers the Government of Russia has made to cooperate in efforts to reduce the amount of counternarcotics, particularly opium products smuggled from Afghanistan into Europe and Eurasia. Afghanistan is the source of more than 80 per cent of the world's opium supply according to United Nations statistics.

-- The training provided by the Russian government to Central Asian states under the projects sponsored by the United Nations, the NATO-Russia council and other bodies have significantly improved their ability to detect and interdict many illicit goods.

-- A public demonstration of commitment to the fight against illicit drugs would be useful, since Russia remains a model for law enforcement in the narcotics transit region of Central Asia.

-- The Central Asia Regional Information Center in Almaty, Kazakhstan, would benefit from increased Russian involvement, both in terms of Russia's superior technical expertise in this area as well as promoting greater commitment by the other partner nations.

-- We urge Russia to quickly sign and seek ratification of the Framework Agreement for the Center soon, in order to publicly demonstrate their commitment to cooperation with regional counternarcotics efforts. We believe Russian leadership will cause the Central Asian countries to re-affirm their own commitment to the Center.

-- We also urge Russia to send several experienced Drug Liaison Officers to help staff the Center and provide their expertise. They are needed urgently to move the Center beyond the pilot phase.

15. (U) REPORTING: Embassy is requested to report informal response from the GOR to NAS and DEA approaches by March 24. Embassy is requested to deliver demarche, if so needed, by March 27 and report any response by March 31. Please slug replies for INL/AAE - Elizabeth Carroll, SCA/RA - Anne Cummings, and EUR/RUS - Kathleen Szpila/Howard Solomon. Please info UNVIE as well.

16. (U) As always, Department appreciates Embassy's assistance.
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